

AVIAN INFLUENZA FACT SHEET

Additional information available at www.dfg.ca.gov/avianflu

What is avian influenza (AI)?

- A virus affecting primarily bird species, both domestic and wild
- There are many types of avian influenza, and some of them can infect other mammals, including humans
- AI strains are classified as either low pathogenic (less contagious) or high pathogenic (highly contagious)
- The strain that is of current concern is highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza or HPAI H5N1

What is HPAI H5N1 and how is it different?

- A strain of low pathogenic AI that changed to a highly contagious and often fatal influenza
- First appeared in Asia around 1997, affecting mostly domestic poultry
- Since then, changes in the virus strain have made it transmittable to other birds, including wild birds, and HPAI H5N1 has now affected some 60 bird species to varying degrees
- Humans have been infected with HPAI H5N1 through direct contact with diseased birds, and some cases of human infection have been fatal

Is HPAI H5N1 in California?

- This strain of AI has not been detected in California or even North America
- The potential for it to reach California is very real
- It can enter California through:
 - importation of infected poultry or captive birds
 - importation or movement of contaminated bird products
 - travel of an infected person into the state
 - migration of infected wild birds along the Pacific Flyway

What wild bird species are most at risk of contracting HPAI H5N1?

- ducks, geese and swans (Anseriformes)
- gulls, terns and shorebirds (Charadriiformes)
- perching birds (Passeriformes)

What is a wild “bird die-off” and does it mean HPAI H5N1 has reached California?

- A wild bird die-off is five or more dead birds found either in a group or over a short period of time (2-3 days)
- A wild bird die-off alone does not indicate the presence of HPAI H5N1

- Wild bird die-offs occur annually in California from any number of avian diseases: avian botulism, avian cholera, mycoplasmosis, salmonellosis, trichomoniasis, exotic Newcastle disease, West Nile virus, and domoic acid poisoning
- DFG collects samples of the dead birds to determine the cause of death and sends this information to both state and national labs

Who do I call if I find a dead bird?

- Domestically reared birds – CA Dept of Food and Agriculture at **800-491-1899**
- Single sick or dead birds – West Nile Virus Hotline at **877-968-2473**
- 5 or more dead birds observed over short period of time (at once or over 2-3 days) – Department of Fish and Game at their **local office**

What else is DFG doing about HPAI H5N1?

- Working with the Governor's Office and collaborating with other state and federal departments and agencies responsible for human health, agricultural and wildlife matters
- Testing and monitoring for this strain of avian influenza in wild birds along with the other avian diseases it routinely tests for in wild birds
- Finalizing an action plan in the event HPAI H5N1 is detected in wild birds in our state to effectively respond to the occurrence of this disease

Am I at risk for contracting HPAI H5N1?

- Humans with intense close contact with wild birds may be at risk (i.e. hunters, wildlife rehabilitators)
- People who have intense close contact with park birds or pet birds that have been in contact with wild birds may be at risk
- Preventing exposure is key in preventing the transmission of this disease to people

How do I avoid exposure to a wild bird infected with HPAI H5N1?

- Do not pick up dead or sick birds
- Wash hands before eating, drinking or smoking
- Avoid picnicking, playing or stepping in bird droppings in outdoor areas of any kind
- Clean shoes, clothes and packs after visiting an area where concentrated bird populations exist

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